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Mark Gregory Pegg: The Corruption of Angels

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The Lauragais in the Thirteenth Century

1

TWO HUNDRED AND ONE DAYS

IN two hundred and one days, between the first of May 1245 and the first of August 1246, five thousand four hundred and seventy-one men and women from the Lauragais were questioned in Toulouse about the heresies of the “good men,” the “good women,” and the Waldensians. Nobles and diviners, butchers and monks, concubines and physicians, blacksmiths and pregnant girls, the leprous and the cruel, the literate and the drunk, the deceitful and the aged—in short, all men over fourteen and all women over twelve were summoned (through their parish priests) by the Dominican inquisitors Bernart de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre. They traveled from their villages in the fertile corridor between the Ariège and Agout rivers to the Romanesque cloister of the Abbey of Saint-Sernin. There, before scribes and witnesses, sworn to the truth, individuals (sometimes almost two hundred in a day) confessed whether they, or anyone else, had ever seen, heard, helped, or sought salvation through the heretics.

Some of the confessions were long and rambling; most were short and sharp—all, without exception, were translated into Latin, then attested. Memories, as old as half a century or as young as the week before last, recalled the mundane and the wonderful: two cobblers knew that all visible things were made by the Devil; widows spoke of houses for heretics; a sum of twelve shillings passed through thirteen hands; notaries read the Gospel of John in *roman*; a monk whined about a *crezen* pissing on his head; a *bon ome* healed a sick child; a *faidit* had a leper for a concubine; an old woman was stuffed in a wine barrel; three knights venerated two holy boys; *bonas femnas* refused to eat meat; cowherds wanted to be scholars; friar-inquisitors were murdered; angels fell to earth; and very few (only forty-one) had ever seen a Waldensian.

This inquisition into heretical depravity in the Lauragais was, without a doubt, the single largest investigation, in the shortest possible time, in the entire European Middle Ages. One can, through reading the surviving manuscript of the Lauragais interrogations, in that twist of fate whereby the luck of the historian rests upon the efficiency of persecutors, grasp, however tentatively, something of the vibrant rhythms by which thousands of medieval men and women lived their lives. All that follows, from angels to adoration, from parchment to paper, from crusades to chestnuts, derives its inspiration from this extraordinary manuscript, whose leaves allow for the passionate evocation of the Lauragais in the years before, as well as during, the great inquisition of Bernart de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre.

2

THE DEATH OF ONE CISTERCIAN

THIRTY-SEVEN years before the inquisition of Bernart de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre a papal legate was murdered in the cool haze of a Provençal dawn. The murder happened on Monday, 14 January 1208, just where the Rhône divides (into *le petit* and *le grand*) before it enters the Mediterranean. The Cistercian Peire de Castelnau, legate of Pope Innocent III and a virulent denouncer of heresy in Languedoc, was about to cross the Rhône (from the right bank to the left) when an anonymous “evil-hearted” squire galloped up behind him and punctured his ribs with a swiftly thrown lance.¹ Peire de Castelnau fell from his pacing mule, briefly raised his arms to heaven, forgave his murderer, and died just as the sun finished rising. The unknown assassin comfortably escaped on a fast horse to nearby Beaucaire.² The abrupt killing of Peire de Castelnau was the immediate cause of twenty-one years of sporadic warfare, indiscriminate butchery, and bloody conquest known as the Albigensian Crusade.³

It took only two months for Innocent III to accuse Raimon VI, the count of Toulouse, in a belligerent (and rhetorically bludgeoning) letter, dated Monday, 10 March 1208, of complicity in the assassination of the papal legate.⁴ After all, less than a year earlier, Peire de Castelnau had excommunicated the count of Toulouse (at the end of a nasty and bitter quarrel) for refusing to publicly suppress heresy.⁵ Innocent III, at the time, took up this excommunication, confirmed it, and then, amplifying the anger of his legate in a letter of more than thirteen thousand words, told the count of Toulouse, in one overwrought metaphor after another, that his lands deserved to be confiscated because he was so strongly suspected of heresy.⁶ Now, a year later, Innocent III, convinced that Raimon VI had rewarded and protected Peire de Castelnau’s murderer, proclaimed a crusade, with the same indulgences as would be granted for an expedition to Palestine, against the count and the heretics of Languedoc. “Attack the followers of heresy,” the pope commanded all potential *crucesignati*, “more fearlessly than even the Saracens,” since perfidious heretics, “are more evil!”⁷

Yet, while there is no question that Raimon VI, like many Languedocian nobles, appreciated (without necessarily participating in) the holiness of the good men and the good women, it would be wrong to assume that the count of Toulouse knowingly sanctioned the murder of an apos-

tolie envoy.⁸ The troubadour Guilhem de Tudela in his *canço* about the Albigensian Crusade—which he started composing in 1210 and whose sympathies, unlike those of the anonymous poet who continued the song, were clearly with the crusaders—was probably closer to the truth when he sang that the unknown assassin had pierced the spine of the papal legate “hoping to win the count’s approval.”⁹ Raimon VI and Peire de Castelnau certainly disagreed, but the count of Toulouse, well aware of the mischief Innocent III would cause in Languedoc if he had the chance, and lacking the thoughtless *ingénuité* of the legate’s killer, would never have risked the county of Toulouse (which he held as a tenant-in-chief of the French crown), the marquisate of Provence (where he was a vassal of the Holy Roman emperor), the Agenais (whose overlord was the king of England), the counties of Gevaudan and Millau (purchased from King Pere II of Aragon in 1204), the Rouergue, the Quercenois, and the towns of Saint-Gilles, Nîmes, and Beaucaire upon the death of one Cistercian.¹⁰

Innocent III tried to coax and cajole the French king, Philip II Augustus, into leading the crusade against Raimon VI, in *litterae generales* and *litterae speciales*, but the French monarch refused.¹¹ Nevertheless, in May 1208, Philip II Augustus, in a halfhearted response to the irritating mandates of Innocent III, did allow the duke of Burgundy and the count of Nevers, with no more than five hundred knights between them, to take “the sign of the cross” against the heretics of the Midi.¹²

So, in the stifling heat of early July 1209, a large, essentially northern French, crusading army, with “gold-embroidered crosses and bands of silk” displayed on their right breasts, gathered at Lyon.¹³ “If I started right now, not stopping ’till dark, not stopping ’till first light tomorrow,” flourished Guilhem de Tudela with only a small portion of the crusading host in mind, “I couldn’t even begin to tell you the names of those Provençaux who joined the *crozada*, let alone all the others who rushed to join, because no one in the world could do such reckoning,” and, in an offhand codicil after such hyperbole, “none of this, by the bye, recalls the innumerable horsemen brought by the French.”¹⁴ In any event, it does seem that there were probably five thousand mounted *crucesignati* (nobles, bishops, knights, sergeants) and ten to fifteen thousand other pilgrims (an assortment of squires, foot-sergeants, crossbowmen, priests, siege engineers, kitchen boys, blacksmiths, mercenaries, prostitutes, monks, cooks, carpenters, servants, wives, meanderers, armorers, thieves, and child scavengers).¹⁵

Raimon VI—reviled as the “count of cunning” by the youthful Cistercian historian Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay, writing a decade after the death of Peire de Castelnau¹⁶—managed on Sunday, 18 June 1209, with the *crucesignati* quickly descending upon Languedoc, to reconcile him-

self to the Church and even, four days later, to be indulged as a crusader.¹⁷ At this point, with the count of Toulouse no longer the target of the crusade, a decision was taken by the leading “soldiers of Christ” that they should invade, instead, the heresy-infected lands of the twenty-four-year-old Raimon-Roger Trencavel, *vescomte* of Béziers, Carcassonne, Razès, and Albi, a youth whose overlord (as count of Barcelona) was King Pere II of Aragon rather than Raimon VI.¹⁸

This resolution decided upon, and with the count of Toulouse guiding them, the crusaders moved down the Mediterranean coast until they stopped on the warm evening of Tuesday, 21 July 1209, below the walls of Béziers and pitched their tents on the sandy west bank of the river Orb.¹⁹ The next day, the feast of Saint Mary Magdalen, Raimon-Roger Trencavel having galloped away to Carcassonne, the men and women of Béziers, refusing to hand over any heretics, were completely surprised and overwhelmed when, in response to the death and dismemberment of a crusader by some Biterrois, thousands of frenzied servant boys from the crusaders’ army, “with not a pair of shoes between them,” leaping defensive ditches and scrambling over ramparts, finally succeeded after an hour or so, through sheer numbers and blood lust, in smashing open the city’s gates.²⁰ Once inside Béziers, these vicious boys began to kill everyone they met, young and old, with wooden clubs.²¹ Amidst all this killing a greedy search began for treasure, and it was only at this point in the massacre, according to Guilhem de Tudela, that the crusading nobility rode in and “drove the lads out with sticks, like dogs.”²² In revenge, these ragtag youths, these aroused *ribaids*, started shouting, “Burn it! Burn it!” and so Béziers, its population butchered, was burnt to the ground.²³

Arnaud Amalric, the papal legate leading the crusaders, writing to Innocent III shortly after the cleansing of Béziers, joyfully told the pope “that our men [*nostris*] spared no one, irrespective of rank, sex, or age, and put to the sword almost [*ferre*] 20,000 people,” and—the final apocalyptic touch as he recalled the flames of burning Béziers—“divine vengeance raged miraculously.”²⁴ As to the truth of Arnaud Amalric’s triumphant death tally, his accounting was perhaps too high by only five or seven thousand.²⁵ Also, as Arnaud Amalric’s obvious pleasure at the destruction of Béziers reveals, the cruelty of the servant boys is not to be seen as a tragic exercise in vulgar excitability; quite the opposite, the shoeless *ribaids* did nothing more than act out the extremely lucid intentions of the crusading nobility toward any town or village that did not immediately surrender.²⁶ Incidentally, Bernart de Caux, if not originally from Agen, was possibly born in the region of Béziers just before, or just after, the coming of the crusaders.²⁷

The crusaders, after resting for three days by the smoldering ruins of Béziers, started a leisurely march through the valley of the Aude upon Carcassonne. They reached Carcassonne on Saturday, 1 August 1209, and, after encircling the entire city with their camp, vigorously attacked at dawn three days later, quickly storming the ring of thirty towers that made up the outer wall.²⁸ Raimon-Roger Trencavel retreated, with most of the inhabitants of Carcassonne, into his citadel, the *cité* proper, and, lacking food and water, prepared to fight and die.²⁹ The young *vescomte*, tormented by desperate thirst, suffocating heat, escalating fear, stinging flies, and the “crying and shrieking of the women and little children,” finally surrendered, after a fortnight of such agonies, his city, goods, lands, everything he and the people of the Carcassès owned, to the crusaders on Saturday, 15 August 1209.³⁰ Simon, count of Montfort l’Amaury in the Ile-de-France, became, by common consent among the noble and ecclesiastical *crucesignati*, the new *vicomte* of Béziers, Carcassonne, Razès, and Albi.³¹ In effect, Simon de Montfort also became the new lay leader of the crusade, undertaking the “sacred business of Jesus Christ in the fight against the infection of heresy,”³² particularly as many of the crusader nobility, like the duke of Burgundy and the count of Nevers, left the army and returned north.³³ Raimon-Roger Trencavel was imprisoned by the crusaders and would die, probably from dysentery, three months later on Tuesday, 10 November 1209.³⁴

Simon de Montfort, despite the retirement of many crusaders, so that he had “scarcely any companions,” not only swiftly occupied villages, *castra*, in the southern Lauragais, like Fanjeaux and Montréal sitting upon their small strategic hills, but he also, without warning, swept into the territories of Count Raimon-Roger of Foix (whose suzerain, once more, was Pere II of Aragon), seizing Pamiers and Mirepoix.³⁵ Castres, on the Agout in the northeast of the Lauragais, and Albi, on the southern bank of the Tarn, were also hastily grabbed by the new *vicomte*.³⁶ In Castres one captured heretic, fastened to a wooden stake by heavy irons around his legs, stomach, and throat, was burnt in the village square. The death of this anonymous man, whom Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay described as a “perfected heretic,” was Simon de Montfort’s (and so, in a sense, the Albigensian Crusade’s) first, though far from last, deliberate incineration of an individual accused of heresy.³⁷

In early September 1209, Raimon VI, having successfully diverted the crusaders away from his lands, which included most of the Lauragais, was, rather rudely, and certainly unexpectedly, sent a delegation from Simon de Montfort and Arnaud Amalric demanding that all heretics living in the city of Toulouse be handed over immediately for judgment. The count, and the consuls, of Toulouse refused.³⁸ Once more, Raimon VI was threatened with excommunication; once more, he appealed to

Innocent III; and, not quite believing his inability to shake off the crusaders, he also complained to his liege lords Philip II Augustus and the emperor Otto IV of Brunswick.³⁹ All this effort was wasted. On Sunday, 6 February 1211, a new sentence of excommunication was placed upon the count of Toulouse by a chorus of archbishops (Narbonne and Arles) and bishops (Avignon, Maguelonne, Toulouse, and Orange).⁴⁰ Innocent III confirmed the excommunication on Friday, 15 April 1211.⁴¹

While all this futile, and sometimes humiliating, diplomacy by Raimon VI was going on, Simon de Montfort, having lost a few *castra* during the chilly winter of 1209, campaigned aggressively, brutally, and victoriously, throughout the next year and a half, aided by an influx of new *crucesignati*. For instance, in the Lauragais, he attacked and easily overcame Bram, a *castrum* positioned, a little too candidly, in the middle of the flat cereal-rich fields that lay (and still lie) between Carcassonne and Castelnaudary. In revenge for the facial mutilation of some crusaders a few months earlier at Minerve,⁴² a hundred of Bram's defenders had their noses sliced off and their eyes gouged out. These mutilated fellows were then made to traipse behind a one-eyed companion (whose cyclops condition was also the result of crusader surgery) throughout the Lauragais until, finally, thirty kilometers away, they found comfort in Cabaret.⁴³

Lavaur, on the west bank of the Agout, caught in that fuzzy area of demarcation where the Trencavel lands in the Albigeois met those of the counts of Toulouse in the Lauragais, was, after a siege of five to six weeks, taken by the crusaders on Tuesday, 3 May 1211.⁴⁴ In the malevolent thrill of victory, four hundred townspeople, all condemned as heretics, were gathered in a meadow and burnt in a great funeral pyre. As this holocaust took place, eighty or so Lavaur knights were enthusiastically put to the sword when the initial idea of a mass hanging, with all the humiliation such a death meant for a *miles*, failed because the jerry-built gibbet toppled over. A coda to all this cruelty was the death of na (from *domna*, lady) Girauda, the dame-seigneur of Lavaur: this elegant and courtly woman was held over a deep well, shrieking and screaming, before her captors dropped her in and gleefully threw stones on top of her.⁴⁵

Simon de Montfort, Lavaur in his possession, and secure in his right to sieze the territories of anyone punished with excommunication, now invaded the lands of the count of Toulouse.⁴⁶ Montgey, in the Vieilmorez to the north of the Lauragais, became the first *castrum* overwhelmed by the crusaders that lay, without any legal doubt, under the lordship of Raimon VI.⁴⁷ In the Lauragais itself, the village of les Cassés, close to the old Roman road from Carcassonne to Toulouse, was smoothly occupied, and, with brisk punctiliousness, sixty heretics were tossed into fires.⁴⁸ Toulouse, "the flower and rose of all cities,"⁴⁹ finally got to see the "French

of France," *Frances de Fransa*, as Guilhem de Tudela and the anonymous *canso*-continuator invariably call the *langue du roi* crusaders,⁵⁰ when Simon de Montfort's army camped before the strong southeastern walls (between the Porte Narbonnaise and the Porte de Villeneuve) on Thursday, 16 June 1211.⁵¹ Simon de Montfort, lacking men and resources, vainly tried a number of sorties against the defenses of Toulouse but, achieving nothing, abandoned the siege on Wednesday, 29 June 1211, and, retreating to Castelnaudary, started to raid the possessions of Raimon-Roger of Foix.⁵²

Raimon VI, remarkably clumsy in warfare, could not dislodge Simon de Montfort from Castelnaudary.⁵³ So, when new *crucesignati* arrived in Languedoc from the Rhineland, Frisia, Saxony, Westphalia, even the Balkans, and, of course, northern France, Simon de Montfort managed, quite adroitly, to capture one *castrum* after another until, by the end of the summer of 1212, only the city of Toulouse itself remained unconquered.⁵⁴ Simon de Montfort ended the year by promulgating at Pamiers, before a council of his followers, a set of statutes reorganizing his conquests into a colonial regime that, though in the deep south of the Midi, would faithfully mirror the "good customs," the *bonos mores*, way to the north in Paris and the Ile-de-France.⁵⁵

Pere II of Aragon, worried at the turn of events north of the Pyrénées, especially at the seemingly inexhaustible ambition and talent of Simon de Montfort, decided to formally intervene on behalf of Raimon VI and arrange a truce, at the very least, among the pope, the crusaders, and the count of Toulouse.⁵⁶ The Argonese king did not fear any accusation of heresy—he was, after all, still bathed in an aura of Christian glory since his victory, with the kings of Castile and Navarre, over the Almohade Muslims at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in Andalusia on Saturday, 16 July 1212.⁵⁷ At first, Pere II of Aragon met with some sympathy from Innocent III, but, as with all attempts at reconciliation among the crusaders, the Languedocian prelates, and the count of Toulouse, nothing was achieved (except the continuation of violence at an even more feverish pitch).⁵⁸ The king of Aragon was, understandably, somewhat dismayed by his diplomatic failure, and so, in an ambitious riposte to such spiteful crusader intransigence, he proceeded on Sunday, 27 January 1213, to accept oaths of allegiance from Raimon VI, his son Raimon, the twenty-four consuls of Toulouse, Raimon-Roger of Foix, his son Roger-Bernart, Bernart of Comminges, his son Bernart, and Gaston de Béarn. These grand gestures of fealty completely altered the feudal map of Languedoc, theoretically tearing off the county of Toulouse from the *regnum* of France and making Pere II of Aragon the effective suzerain, protector, and arbitrator of all the territories occupied, or threatened, by the crusaders.⁵⁹

In August 1213, Pere II of Aragon crossed the Pyrénées intending to destroy, once and for all, Simon de Montfort. Outside the little village of Muret, snug by the west bank of the Garonne and roughly twenty kilometers from Toulouse, the king of Aragon was joined by Raimon VI, Raimon-Roger of Foix, and Bernart of Comminges. Simon de Montfort's army, going through one of its habitual shrinkages because a large number of knights had left after completing their forty-day crusading vow, were trapped inside Muret. Nevertheless, because of a perfectly timed cavalry charge into the Aragonese host, Simon de Montfort was victorious. It was all over, bar the shouting, in less than an hour on the morning of Thursday, 12 September 1213. Pere II of Aragon was dead, his five-year-old son Jaume captured, and his knights either slaughtered in battle or drowned in the Garonne as they fled. A stunned Raimon VI simply rode away without unsheathing his sword, an exile, fleeing, soon after, to England.⁶⁰

Simon de Montfort, despite renewed Languedocian defiance after Muret, and difficulties in having his conquests formally recognized, did, in the end, get named the new count of Toulouse by Innocent III at the Fourth Lateran Council in November 1215.⁶¹ Eight months earlier, Philip II Augustus, confident after his spectacular victory over King John of England and the emperor Otto IV at Bouvines in Flanders on Sunday, 27 July, finally allowed his son Louis to become a *crucesignatus*.⁶² Louis, staying no longer than his obligatory forty days, helped Simon de Montfort suppress all lingering dissent to rule by the "French," and, most important, the prince and the count dismantled the walls, towers, and other fortifications of Narbonne and Toulouse.⁶³ In April 1216, Philip II Augustus accepted Simon de Montfort's homage for the county of Toulouse, the duchy of Narbonne, and the *vicomtés* of Béziers and Carcassonne.⁶⁴

Raimon VI, though stripped of all his possessions by the papacy, immediately began a vigorous resistance, largely undertaken by his talented son, so that, within a year, the two Raimons had retaken Avignon and Beaucaire.⁶⁵ The old count, hidden by a gray early morning mist, even managed to sneak (after a fashion, as he and his entourage still had their vibrant banners unfurled) into Toulouse on Wednesday, 13 September 1217.⁶⁶ The men and women of the city, "great and small, lords and ladies, wives and husbands," overcome with joy, mobbed Raimon VI, kissing his clothing, feet, legs, arms, and fingers.⁶⁷ After months of murmuring, "God, you have delivered us into the hands of Pharaoh,"⁶⁸ or so the anonymous *canso*-continuator had the Toulousains lament about Simon de Montfort's harsh rule, everyone started to say to each other, with rising excitement, "Now we have Jesus Christ!" and "This is our Lord who was lost!"⁶⁹ This joy, swiftly giving way to giddy violence, especially as each

person started to feel “as brave as Oliver,” caused the great and the small to run through the streets crying, “Toulouse!” as they grabbed apple-wood cudgels, pikes, and clubs, before clobbering to death all the “French” they could find.⁷⁰ Simon de Montfort’s wife, Alice, withdrew with her surviving knights into the comital castle, the Château Narbonnais, saying, at least in the wicked deadpan irony of the anonymous *canso*-continuator, “And yesterday all was going so well!”⁷¹

Simon de Montfort, told of the trouble in the Toulousain by a “squire fluent in many dialects” whom his wife had instantly dispatched, hastily rode back from the Rhône valley where he was besieging rebellious *castra* and immediately assaulted the southern walls of Toulouse near the Porte Montoulieu (which was about five hundred meters east of the Château Narbonnais).⁷² So, as the men, women, and children of Toulouse attacked the Château Narbonnais within the city, they themselves were being attacked by Simon de Montfort outside their newly rebuilt walls, moats, and ditches. The anonymous *canso*-continuator remembered an impromptu garden that “burst forth and blossomed” every day in the Montoulieu field. “It was sown with lilies,” the poet softly sang about this *jardin*, “but the white and the red that budded and flowered were of flesh, blood, weapons, and splattered brains. Spirits and souls, sinners and saved, the freshly killed replenished hell and paradise.”⁷³

The siege went on for another nine months, each side reinforced by new recruits, especially mercenaries, each side building trebuchets, mangonels, and other catapults, each side flinging stones “like a snowstorm, like thunder and tempest,” so that these rocks “shook the town, the river, and the riverbank.”⁷⁴ Alice de Montfort escaped north and set about raising reinforcements. Meanwhile, “I want nothing that’s in Toulouse, nothing,” the anonymous *canso*-continuator has Simon de Montfort, frustrated by the Toulousain resistance, bitterly tell his followers, “except the destruction of the place and the people!”⁷⁵ Unfortunately, as far as Simon de Montfort was concerned, on Monday, 25 June 1218, a rock flung from a mangonel worked by little girls and men’s wives struck him on his crystal-encrusted helmet, “shattering his eyes, brains, back teeth, forehead, and jaw.” Simon de Montfort, “bleeding and black,” fell to the ground dead.⁷⁶ Exactly a month later the crusaders, after one more lackluster assault on Toulouse, retreated with the body of Simon de Montfort to Carcassonne where it was buried *more gallico*.⁷⁷

In the aftermath of Simon de Montfort’s death, the energy needed to continue the crusade, to retake lost *castra*, just was not there. Aimery de Montfort, though acclaimed by his father’s followers as count of Toulouse, steadily lost all crusading conquests to the triumphant campaigning of Raimon VI and his son, “the brave young count who paints the darkness with gold and brings green back to a dead world.”⁷⁸ Pope

Honorius III, elected to the papal throne in 1216, tried, like his predecessor, to entice Philip II Augustus into becoming a participant in the Languedocian crusade.⁷⁹ The pope offered the French monarch papal protection, absolution from penance because of the English wars, even half of all crusading tithes—and yet, despite such gifts, Philip II Augustus was still wary.⁸⁰ Until, that is, the pope turned to the young and aggressive (and potentially rebellious) count of Champagne, Thibaut IV, for help in fighting the southern heretics. Philip II Augustus now provoked into action, but forever cautious about involvement in the south, eventually allowed his son Louis, after a year's preparation, to take a second expeditionary force into the Midi.⁸¹

Prince Louis marched into Languedoc in May 1219 with “cartloads of weapons” and, in the company of Aimery de Montfort, immediately captured the town of Marmande.⁸² Five thousand men, women, and children were, with little more than a second thought, hacked to pieces by the crusaders. The ground was littered with arms and legs, lungs and livers, blood and brains, “as if they had rained down from the sky.”⁸³ Louis was, apparently, annoyed by this improvised butchery; in any event, he made no attempt to stop it.⁸⁴ After this massacre, recalling the slaughter of Béziers a decade earlier, the royal *crucesignati* marched on Toulouse and started besieging it on Sunday, 16 June 1219. After six weeks of inconclusive warfare, Louis, his forty-day crusading commitment over, abruptly ended the siege on Thursday, 1 August 1219, and returned to France.⁸⁵

Three years after this, during August 1222, Raimon VI, sixty-six years old and still an excommunicant, died at Toulouse.⁸⁶ Almost a year later, on Friday, 14 July 1223, Philip II Augustus, aged fifty-eight, died at Mantes.⁸⁷ Aimery de Montfort, seemingly abandoned (once more) by the French crown, endeavored throughout these years, in a number of truces with Raimon VII, to secure some sort of peace in Languedoc.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, in January 1224, Aimery de Montfort fled from the Midi, and, with this northern interloper gone, the counts of Toulouse and Foix recalled young Raimon Trencavel as *vescomte* of Béziers, Carcassonne, Razès, and Albi. After almost fifteen years of cruel and bitter fighting, Languedoc was, at least in feudal terms, close to what it been before the death of Peire de Castelnau.⁸⁹

Such a situation could not last long. On Sunday, 30 November 1225, at Bourges, in a scenerio all too familiar, fourteen archbishops, one hundred and thirteen bishops, and one hundred and fifty abbots, all fretting about the persistence of heresy and the reinvigoration of the southern nobility, excommunicated Raimon VII and proclaimed the continuation of the crusade.⁹⁰ Aimery de Montfort had, by this time, ceded all his (somewhat brittle) rights to the king of France, Louis VIII.⁹¹ So, with

the financial and moral aid of the new papal legate to France, Roman Frangipani, Louis VIII prepared to invade the Midi for a third time. Royal prestige, and the efficient bureaucracy established by Philip II Augustus, sufficed to persuade enough barons of France to join their king at Lyon in June 1226 for what would be a majestic campaign of conquest. This royal host was easily twice the size of the crusading army of 1209.⁹² The king captured Avignon in September 1226 after a three-month siege and then proceeded to march toward Toulouse.⁹³ Louis VIII, after his initial delay at Avignon, hastily occupied the possessions of the Trencavels along the Aude, but before he could strengthen his position, the thirty-nine-year-old king died (from an illness he caught during the Avignon siege) on Sunday, 8 November 1226, at Montpensier.⁹⁴ "Rome, you killed good King Louis," no question about it, so the Toulousain troubadour Guilhem Figueira sang in his bitter and angry *sirventes* (an overtly satirical *canço*) a few years later, "because, with your false preaching, you lured him away from Paris."⁹⁵

The death of Louis VIII did not end the war in the south. The king had installed *sénéchaux* and *baillis*, royal administrators, in his newly acquired lands and had reorganized (along northern French lines) the territories ceded to him by Aimery de Montfort as the *sénéchaussées* of Beaucaire-Nîmes and Carcassonne-Béziers. All this royal domain was placed firmly under the control of his cousin Imbert de Beaujeu and protected by five hundred northern French knights. The crusade, as undertaken by Imbert de Beaujeu, became an exercise in the gradual exhaustion of Raimon VII and the county of Toulouse. It was a campaign of one small atrocity after another, of a vineyard burnt here, of a field destroyed there, of hamlets razed, of men and women murdered. The *castra* of the Toulousain and the Lauragais were especially hurt by Imbert de Beaujeu.⁹⁶ Finally, Raimon VII, badly in debt, starved of resources, and fighting a losing battle against the *éclat* of the French crown, was offered the chance for peace—which he gladly took in 1229.⁹⁷

On Holy Thursday, 12 April 1229, the Peace of Paris, whose twenty-two articles had already been accepted by an ecclesiastical *concilium* at Meaux in January 1229, officially ended the Albigensian Crusade.⁹⁸ The thirty-one-year-old Raimon VII swore submission to the Church and to the not yet fifteen-year-old Louis IX.⁹⁹ He had to dismiss all mercenaries, remove any Jews in his service, and, from then on, confiscate the property of anyone who remained excommunicated for more than a year.¹⁰⁰ This last clause particularly affected the numerous southern nobles, knights, and other persons exiled from their properties whom the northern French called *faidits*—rebel, heretical sympathizer, fugitive, and criminal all at once.¹⁰¹ The count of Toulouse, though no longer an ex-communicant or *faidit* himself, forfeited to the French crown over two-

thirds of the lands formerly held by his father. Raimon VII, as a vassal of the French king, was permitted to keep most of the diocese of Toulouse, including the Lauragais, the Albigeois north of the Tarn, the Rouergue, Quercy (but not Cahors), and the Agenais. The marquisate of Provence, east of the Rhône, however, was surrendered to the Church (though it would be returned to Raimon VII in 1234). In Toulouse itself the Château Narbonnais was to be occupied by the French crown for ten years.¹⁰²

One qualification, which would have extreme future ramifications, was that Raimon VII had to hand over his nine-year-old daughter Joanna into the custody of Louis IX so that she could be married to one of the king's brothers. Joanna de Tolosa was quickly betrothed to the nine-year-old Alphonse de Poitiers in June 1229, and, with somewhat less haste, they married in 1236 (or 1237).¹⁰³ At the death of Raimon VII his daughter and her husband were to inherit his properties; in the unlikely event that they had no children, then the county of Toulouse would be completely absorbed into the *regnum* of France.¹⁰⁴ Another qualification, equally profound in its implications, especially for the medieval inquisition, was that the count of Toulouse and his local administrative officials, especially his *bayles*, promised to hunt down all heretics in Languedoc. Indeed, all the subjects of Raimon VII and of Louis IX in the south were required to take an oath to aid the Church in the pursuit of heresy. There was even a bounty of two marks (four *livres* of Paris) for any heretic captured in the next two years. After this, the prize for a good man, a good woman, or a Waldensian would be reduced to one mark.¹⁰⁵

Whatever the anonymous assassin had in mind when he killed Peire de Castelnau, the consequences of his action, especially the long and bloody Albigensian Crusade, transformed an act of swift thuggery into an inescapable *avant-propos* by which all efforts at understanding the great inquisition of Bernart de Caux and Jean de Saint-Pierre, by which all attempts at comprehending what it was like to live in the thirteenth-century Lauragais, must always be prefaced.¹⁰⁶